1847

MAY 30, BRUNSWICK, MAINE

PUBLICATION OF

A Word to the "Little Flock."

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1847

(Lt 3, 1847)

JULY 13, GORHAM, MAINE

LETTER TO

Joseph Bates.[1]

This letter is published in entirety in Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases,* vol. 5, pp. 95-98.

Narrative of circumstances surrounding the "Midnight Cry" and "Bridegroom" visions of December 1844 and February 1845.

Dear Brother Bates:

As James [**James Springer White**] is at work[2] and sisters are from home[3]

[1] *Identity:* The letter is addressed "Mr. Joseph Bates, Fairhaven, Mass."

[2] Six weeks later James White wrote to friends, "God has blessed me with health to labor with my hands. . . . I have been able to earn about $25.00 the past six weeks; and my health is much improved. For this I do praise God." The exact nature of his manual labor during these weeks is not known.

See: James White to Elvira Hastings, Aug. 22, 1847.

[3] As is implied in several early sources, Ellen and James White stayed in the home of Ellen's parents in Gorham, Maine, from the time of their marriage in August 1846 until October 1847. At the time of writing, two of Ellen's sisters, Sarah (later Sarah B. Belden) and Elizabeth (later Elizabeth N. Bangs) were still unmarried and presumably living at home.

See: James White to Elvira Hastings, Aug. 22, 1847; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts [vol. 2],* p. 83; James R. Nix, "Robert Harmon," p. 3; Artemas C. Harmon, ed., *The Harmon Genealogy,* p. 41; 1850 U.S. Federal Census, "Samuel McCann," Maine, Cumberland County,

thought I would employ myself in writing a line to you. My health is quite good for me. My faith is still strong that that very same Jesus that ascended up into heaven will so come in like manner as He went up, and that very, very soon. I have had many trials of late; discouragement at times has laid so fast hold upon me it seemed impossible to shake it off. But thank God, Satan has not got the victory over me yet, and by the grace of God he never shall. I know and feel my weakness, but I have laid hold upon the strong arm of Jehovah, and I can say today I know that my Redeemer liveth, and if He lives I shall live also. Oh, how good it would be to meet with a few of like precious faith to exhort and comfort one another with words of holy cheer from the Word of God.[4] The sheep are now scattered, but thank God they are about to be gathered to a good pasture.

Oh, how sweet it will be to meet all the blood-washed throng in the city of our God. 'Tis then we'll sing the song of Moses and the Lamb as we march through the gates into the city, bearing the palms of victory and wearing the crowns of glory. Brother Bates, you write in a letter to James[5] something about the Bridegroom's coming,[6] as stated in the first published visions. By the letter you would like to know whether I had light on the Bridegroom's coming before I saw it in vision. I can readily answer, No.[7] The Lord showed

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Poland, p. 34; William C. White, "Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XII. Removal to Saratoga Springs," *Review,* May 23, 1935, p. 10.

[4] The implication is that there were no other Sabbathkeepers in Gorham at this time, not even Ellen's parents, in whose house the Whites were living. The first evidence that Robert and Eunice Harmon had accepted the Sabbath is found a year later when James White wrote of "Ellen's parents" that "they are with us in the faith."

See: James White to "Dear Brother and Sister," Aug. 26, 1848.

[5] This letter is not in the White Estate archives.

[6] Prior to January 1845 the general Adventist interpretation of the Bridegroom's coming as portrayed in the parable of the 10 virgins was that it represented the second coming of Christ to the earth to receive His bride, the church. Sometime in January 1845 Apollos Hale (c. 1807-after 1882) and Joseph Turner (1807-1862) published the radically different view that the bride represented the New Jerusalem and the coming of the Bridegroom signified the coming of Christ to the Father to receive the kingdom (represented by the New Jerusalem) prior to His return to earth at the Second Coming. A few weeks later, "about the middle of February," Ellen Harmon was shown in vision a view of the Bridegroom's coming that in some major respects agreed with the position of Hale and Turner.

See: A. Hale and J. Turner, "Has Not the Savior Come as the Bridegroom?" *Advent Mirror,* January 1845, pp. 3, 4; SDAE, s.v. "Apollos Hale," "Joseph Turner"; EGWEnc, s.v. "Joseph Turner."

[7] The question here raised by Joseph Bates whether Ellen White had prior knowledge of matters shown her in vision was destined to become a central issue to those concerned with testing or confirming the genuineness of the visions. In some cases, as with the present one, Ellen White's answer was no, she had no previous acquaintance with the matters shown in vision. In other cases she did have prior knowledge, but as she pointed out, this in itself did not negate the genuineness of the vision. "What if you had said ever so much? Would that affect the visions that God gives me? If so, then the visions are nothing. . . . What you have said, Sister Loveland, influenced me not at all. My opinion has nothing to do with what God has shown me in vision."

me the travail of the Advent band and midnight cry in December,[8] but He did not show me the Bridegroom's coming until February following. Perhaps you would like to have me give a statement in relation to both visions. At the time I had the vision of the midnight cry I had given it up in the past and thought it future, as also most of the band had.[9] I know not what time J. Turner [Joseph Turner] got out his paper. I knew he had one out and one was in the house, but I knew not what was in it, for I did not read a word in it.[10] I had been, and still was, very sick. I took no interest in reading, for it injured my head and made me nervous. After I had the vision and God gave me light, He bade me deliver it to the band, but I shrank from it. I was young, and I thought they would not receive it from me. I disobeyed the Lord, and instead of remaining at home, where the meeting was to be that night, I got in a sleigh in the morning and rode three or four miles [six kilometers] and there I found J. T. He merely inquired how I was and if I was in the way of my duty. I said nothing, for I knew I was not. I passed up chamber and did not see him again for two hours, when he came up, asked if I was to be at meeting that night. I told him, no. He said he wanted to hear my vision and thought it duty for me to go home. I told him I should not. He said no more, but went away. I thought, and told those around me, if I went I should have to come out against his views, thinking he believed with the rest.[11] I had not told any of them what God had shown me, and I did not tell them in what I should cut across his track.

All that day I suffered much in body and mind. It seemed that God had forsaken me entirely. I prayed the Lord if He would give me strength to ride home that night, the first opportunity I would deliver the message He had given me. He did give me strength and I rode home that night. Meeting had been done some time, and not a word was said by any of the family about the meeting.

Very early next morning J. T. [Joseph Turner] called, said he was in haste going out of the city in a short time, and wanted I should tell him all that God had shown me in vision. It was with fear and trembling I told him all.

See: Ellen G. White, Lt 6, 1851 (Apr. 1).

[8] On the significance of the expression "Midnight Cry," see Lt 1, 1845 (Dec. 20), note 6.

[9] In other words, by December 1844 Ellen Harmon no longer believed that the 2300-day prophecy had ended on October 22, 1844, but that its ending was still future.

[10] It is not clear which paper Ellen White refers to here. The vision under discussion in this part of the letter is the first vision of December 1844, which she appears to have related to the Portland "band" within days of receiving it. The *Advent Mirror,* which Joseph Turner edited together with A. Hale, contained the groundbreaking article "Has Not the Savior Come as the Bridegroom?" which was in general agreement with the December vision but was not published until January 1845. Another possibility is that the reference is to the Portland-based *Hope of Israel.* This periodical had begun publication some months earlier and was also coedited by Joseph Turner.

See: A. Hale and J. Turner, "Has Not the Savior Come as the Bridegroom?" *Advent Mirror,* January 1845, pp. 3, 4; "The Hope of Israel," *Advent Herald,* Aug. 7, 1844, p. 5.

[11] That is, she thought Turner had given up the belief that God had led in the proclamation of October 22, 1844.

After I had got through he said he had told out the same last evening. I was rejoiced, for I expected he was coming out against me, for all the while I had not heard anyone say what he believed. He said the Lord had sent him to hear me talk the evening before, but as I would not, He meant His children should have the light in some way, so He took him. There were but few out when he talked, so the next meeting I told my vision, and the band, believing my visions from God, received what God bade me to deliver to them.

The view about the Bridegroom's coming I had about the middle of February 1845.

While in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Damman,[12] James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door.[13] I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand. There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher the most of the time for twenty years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had risen in the band on the shut door. She had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut. (I had known nothing of their differences.) Sister Durben[14] got up to talk. I felt very, very sad. At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking I fell from my chair to the floor.[15] It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom.[16] They were all deeply interested in the

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[12] *Identity:* Israel Damman [sometimes Damon or Dammon] (c. 1811-1886). A Millerite preacher and subsequent Advent Christian minister, who received notoriety for his arrest and trial reported in several New England newspapers following a meeting in Atkinson, Maine, on February 15, 1845.

See: EGWEnc, s.v. "Israel Damman"; James R. Nix, "Another Look at Israel Damman."

[13] *See:* Introductory article "The 'Shut Door' and Ellen White's Visions" and note 16 below.

[14] This person has not been identified.

[15] For more on Ellen White's physical posture while in vision, see W. C. White to C. A. Zumwalf, Feb. 24, 1936, and James R. Nix, "Another Look at Israel Damman," p. 16.

[16] For the earliest published accounts of this vision, see: Ellen G. Harmon, "Letter From Sister Harmon," *Day-Star,* Mar. 15, 1846 (Lt 1, 1845 [Dec. 20]); *idem,* "To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad," Ms 1, 1846 (Apr. 6).

Ellen White makes the comment a few lines further on that "most of them received the vision," that is, the vision of the Bridegroom's coming, "and were settled upon the shut door." The conflating of the two events shows that they were not disparate happenings but closely related. According to the parable of the 10 virgins from which this imagery is taken (Matt. 25), "the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut"; that is, to accept that the Bridegroom had come on October 22, 1844 (see note 6 above) also entailed accepting that the "door" had been "shut" in some sense.

Those who accepted that a door had been shut in 1844 had disparate views as to what this meant. A survey of the contemporary literature reveals some who held a moderate position on the "shut door," whereby those consciously rejecting the divinely led "seventh month" preaching in 1844 had sinned against the Holy Spirit. Others held the far more radical position that the door was shut on all non-Millerites on October 22, 1844.

The following discussions of early Sabbatarian shut door beliefs—including those of Ellen

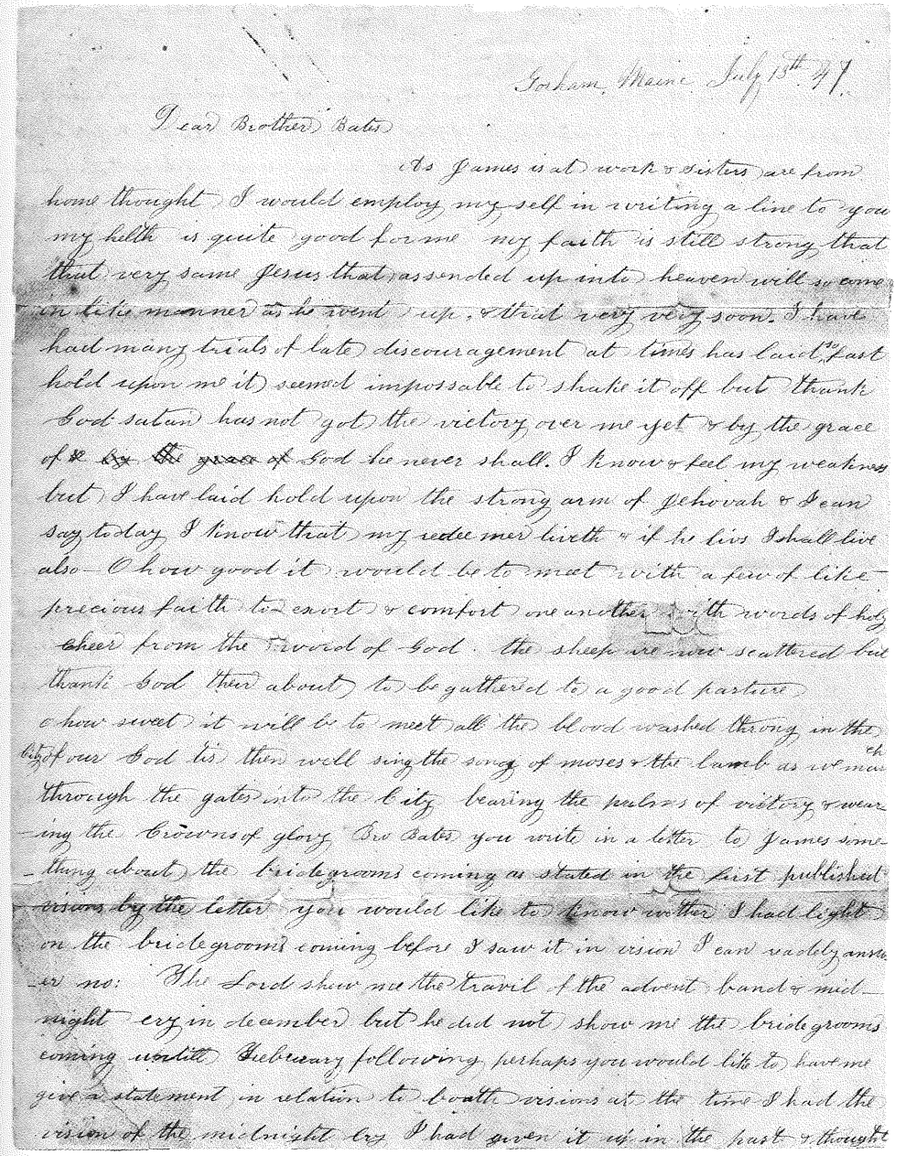
view. They all said it was entirely new to them.[17] The Lord worked in mighty power setting the truth home to their hearts. Sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was, for she had felt it many times; and a short time after I fell she was struck down and fell to the floor, crying to God to have mercy on her. When I came out of vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben's singing and shouting with a loud voice.[18] Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door. Previous to this I had no light on the coming of the Bridegroom, but had expected Him to this earth to deliver His people on the tenth day of the seventh month. I did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating to the Bridegroom's going to the holiest. I had but very few privileges in 1842, 1843, & 1844. My sisters both went to the camp meetings in New Hampshire and Maine, while my health prevented me from going to but one, in Maine. I know the light I received came from God, it was not taught me by man. I knew not how to write so that others could read it till God gave me my visions. I went to school but very little on account of my health. I do not think I went to school a day after I was twelve years old, and did not go then but a few days at a time, when sickness would cause me to take [to] my bed for weeks and sometimes for months. The first I wrote anything that could be called writing was after I had been sick [and] the prayer of faith was put up for me, and healing . . . [Here the sheet ends, and the remainder of the letter is gone.]

White—represent a wide range of views: Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, pp. 500-511, 554-569; Ingemar Lindén, *1844 and the Shut Door Problem*; Rolf J. Poehler, "'. . . and the Door was Shut'"; Gerard P. Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, pp. 149-163; Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question"; Robert W. Olson, "The 'Shut Door' Documents." For further comment on the rejection motif, see Ms 1, 1849 (Mar. 24), note 13.

See also: Introductory article "The 'Shut Door' and Ellen White's Visions"; EGWEnc, s.v. "Shut Door."

[17] At the time of this meeting, in February 1845, the majority Adventist view rejected the related ideas that the Advent preaching in 1844 was the "midnight cry" of the parable or that the Bridegroom had come or that the door had been shut. The alternative view affirming the prophetic significance of October 22, 1844, the coming of the Bridegroom on that date, etc., was very recent, having first been published by Hale and Turner only a few weeks earlier in January 1845. It is not surprising that Ellen White's vision, broadly affirming the Turner alternative, "was entirely new to them."

[18] On ecstatic phenomena in early Adventism, see Appendix article "Ellen White and Religious Enthusiasm in Early Adventist Experience"; EGWEnc, s.v. "Ecstatic Experiences."



Gorham, Maine July 13th 47.

Dear Brother Bates

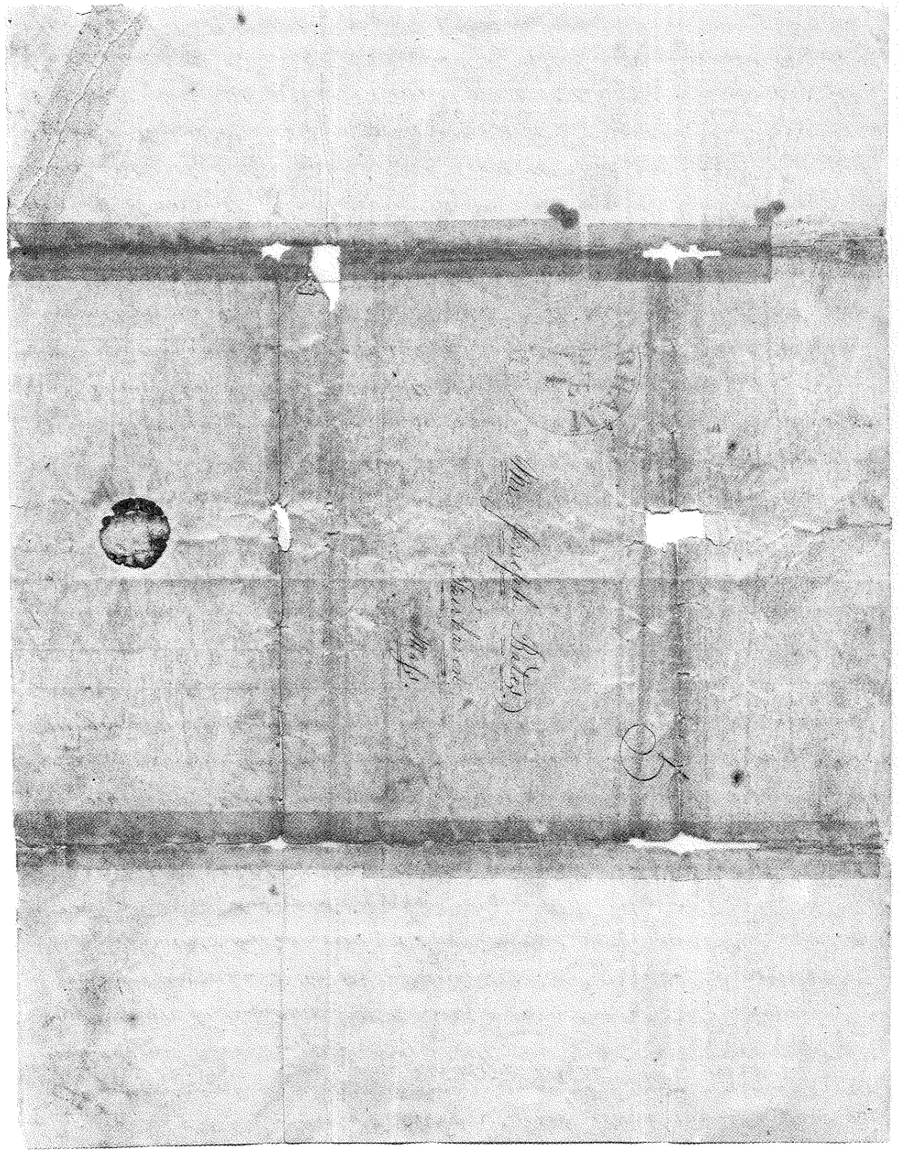
As James is at work & sisters are from home thought I would employ my self in writing a line to you my helth is quite good for me my faith is still strong that that very same Jesus that assended up into heaven will so come in like manner as he went up, & that very very soon. I have had many trials of late discouragement at times has laid fast hold upon me it seemed impossable to shake it off but thanks God satan has not got the victory over me yet & by the grace of & ~~the grace of~~ God he never shall. I know & feel my weakness but I have laid hold upon the strong arm of Jehovah & dare say today I know that my redeemer liveth & if he lives I shall live also— O how good it would be to meet with a few of like precious faith to exort & comfort one another with words of holy cheer from the word of God. the sheep are never scattered but thanks God then about to be gathered to a good pasture O how sweet it will be to meet all the blood washed throng in the city of our God & then will sing the song of moses & the lamb as we march through the gates into the city bearing the palms of victory & wearing the crowns of glory Bro Bates you write in a letter to James something about the bridegrooms coming as stated in the first published visions by the letter you would like to know wether I had light on the bridegroom coming before I saw it in vision I can say in answer no: The Lord shew me the travil of the advent band & midnight cry in december but he did not show me the bridegrooms coming until February following perhaps you would like to have me give a statement in relation to both visions at the time I had the vision of the midnight cry I had given it up in the past & thought

Ellen White's earliest known handwritten letter, written July 13, 1847 (Lt 3, 1847), and addressed to Joseph Bates

it picture as also most of the band had & know not what time J. Turner got out his paper & knew he had one out & one was in the house but & know not what was in it for & did not read a word in it & had ban & still was very sick & took no int-erest in reading for it injured my head & made me nervous after & had the vision & God gave me light he bid me deliver it to the band but & shrunk from it & was young & & thought they would not receive it from me & disobeyed the Lord & ins-tead of returning at home where the meeting was to be that night & got in a sleigh in the morning & rode 3 or 4 miles & then & found J. B. he early inquired how & was and if & was in the way of my duty & said nothing for & knew & was not. & pas-sed up chamber & did not see him again for 2 hours when he came up asked if & was to be at meeting that night & told him no he said he wanted to hear my vision & thought it duty for me to go home & told him & should not. he said no more but went away & thought & told those around me if & went & should have to come out against his views thinking he believed with the rest & had not told any of them what God had shown me and & did not tell them in what & should out across his track all that day & suffered much in body & mind it seemed that God had forsaken me entirely & prayed the Lord & he would give me strength to ride home that night the first opportunity & would deliver the message he had given me. He did give me strength & rode home that night meeting had been done some time & not a word was said by any of the family about the meeting very early next morning J. B. called said he was in haste going out of the city in a short time & wanted & should tell him all that God had shown me in vision it was with fear & trembling & told him all after & had got through he said he had ruled out the same last evening & was rejoiced for & expected he was coming out against me for all the while & had not heard any one say what he believed he said the Lord had sent him to hear me talk the evening before but as & would not he went his children should have the light in some way so he took him their was but few out when he talked to the next meeting & told my vision & the band believing my visions from God receive what God bid me to deliver to them The news about the bridegroom

Turner & Hale's Advent Mirror was dated Jan 1845

coming & had about the middle of February 1845 while in bed & awake in meeting with Israel Dammon James & many others. many of them did not believe in a shut door & suffered much at the commencement of the meeting unbelief seem-ed to be on every hand. there was one sister there that was called very spiritual she had traveled & been a powerful preacher the most of this time for 20 years she had been truly a mother in israel. but a vision had risen in the band on the shut door she has great sympathy & could not believe the door was shut & had known nothing of their differences sister Everton got up to talk & felt very sad at length my soul seemed to be in an agony & while she was talking & fell from my chair to the floor it was then & had a view of jesus rising from his mediatorial throne & going to the holiest as bridegroom to receive his kingdom they were all deeply interested in the view they all said it was entirely new to them the Lord was present in mighty power setting the truth home to their hearts sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was for she had felt it many times & a short time after & fell she was struck down & fell to the floor crying to God to have mercy on her when & came out of vision my eyes were sealed shut as Sis. Durbens singing & shouting with a loud voice. most of them received the vision & was settled upon the shut door. previous to this & had no light on the coming of the bridegroom but had expected him to this earth to deliver his people on the tenth day of the 7th month I did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating to the bridegrooms going to the holiest & had but very few privalages as 42. & 43 my sisters both went to the camp meetings in N. Ham-pshire & chain while my ill health prevented me from going to but one in Chain & knew the light & received came from God at one time & felt impressed to write for my self as well as for others. but as a man & knew not how to write so that others could read it went to school but very little on account of my health & do not think & went to school a day after & was 12 years old & did not go there but a few days at a time when sickness would cause me to take my bed for weeks & some-times for months the first wrote any thing that could be called writing was after & had been sick the prayer of faith was put up for me & healing



1847

(Lt 4, 1847)

AUGUST 25,[1] GORHAM, MAINE

LETTER TO

Elvira Hastings.[2]

Copied from a letter of James White to Elvira Hastings, begun August 22, 1847.[3] Previously unpublished.

Clarification of the prediction that prior to the Second Advent the voice of God will announce the day and the hour of Jesus' coming.

P.S. In your letter[4] you say "Sister White mentions God spoke the day and hour of Jesus' coming," and you inquired "I should like to know if it is to be spoken before we all hear it."[5] To this question I answer by writing Ellen's words that she has just spoken while lying on the bed beside my writing stand.[6] "Tell her that none hear the voice until all hear it. Then every living child of God will hear and know the voice of God as He gives us the day and hour. Then joy and glory will fill every heart." J. W. [James White]

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[1] James White's letter has the place heading "Gorham." For date, see note 3.

[2] *Identity:* The address on the letter reads "Elvira Hastings, New Ipswich, N.H."

[3] The section of James White's letter appearing below is dated "Aug. 25."

[4] It appears that James White's first contact with Elvira Hastings was in a letter written on May 21, 1847, in which he enclosed "two visions." One of these "visions" was the broadsheet containing Ellen White's first recorded vision on the Sabbath, published by Joseph Bates a few weeks earlier, in April, at a cost of $7.50 for 1,000 copies. White indirectly solicited a contribution to help cover the printing costs. The other "vision" sent by White was probably the broadside "To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad," which had been published in April the previous year, 1846. Elvira Hastings replied to White a few days later, on May 28, enclosing a $1.00 contribution and also raising the theological question on the "voice of God."

See: James White to Elvira Hastings, May 21, 1847; James White to Elvira Hastings, Aug. 22, 1847; Ellen G. Harmon, "To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad," Ms 1, 1846 (Apr. 6).

[5] Two of the three visions given in the broadside "To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad" contained the prediction that prior to the Second Advent the voice of God would announce the day and hour of Jesus' coming to the 144,000. For further comments on this prediction, see Lt 1, 1845 (Dec. 20), note 8.

[6] If this part of James White's letter is correctly dated (Aug. 25, 1847), it was the day before Ellen gave birth to their first child, Henry Nichols White. This may explain why Ellen was "lying on the bed." Three days earlier James reported that Ellen "has been out of health for years, and suffers much at this time."

See: James White to Elvira Hastings, Aug. 22-Sept. 1, 1847.